

APPENDIX E

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A SUCCESSFUL CDBG APPLICATION

1. **Call CDBG for assistance whenever you need clarifications about what is being required.** Montana's CDBG Application Guidelines explain the basic requirements of the CDBG program in Chapters II through V and in the five ranking criteria in Chapter V. If you have any questions about anything in the Application Guidelines that is not clear to you, call the Department of Commerce CDBG staff as soon as you can to get an answer. If you think a requirement or application ranking question or issue may not apply to your project, but are not sure if it is really not applicable-- contact CDBG staff to request a clarification.
2. **Thoroughly respond to each of the application ranking issues and questions listed in Chapter V.** Answer each and every one of the questions and all parts of each question listed in Section G of Chapter V. Make sure you respond to all general requirements and special requirements listed under each of the five ranking criteria and in Chapters II through V.
3. **Be complete.** Present all of the relevant evidence. Make sure that any exhibits or appendices you include really support your proposal *and* give evidence that is relevant to your claims. Make sure your attachments (exhibits, appendices) are included before you send it to CDBG.
4. **Approach the Application Guidelines methodically, step-by-step.** Use the Application Guidelines like a checklist. Be sure to address all parts and questions of each of ranking criterion – i.e., address each of the requirements and each of the application questions and issues listed in Chapter V of the Application Guidelines.
5. **Follow the specific instructions given in Appendix D (Application Instructions and Format).** Make sure your attachments (exhibits, appendices) are included before you send it to CDBG.
6. **Tell the whole story. Submitting an application is selling your project, so you must "make your case" and make it clearly and fully.** Don't assume that the people who will review your application know your community or your situation. Present all the relevant evidence that supports each of your claims. Your application must speak for itself, so include all the narrative and evidence you need to make the strongest case possible for your project.

Describe the details and circumstances and evidence for the case you are making clearly and thoroughly. Anticipate all the likely questions that might be asked and address each of them so that you make your case as strong as possible.

7. **Form a Steering Committee or Task Force and set up a calendar for completion.** Preparation of a competitive CDBG application is not a one-person job but requires the work of a team all of whose members are familiar with the CDBG application guidelines and ranking questions. After you have determined which requirements will apply, break the tasks into individual assignments. Put together a

calendar to make sure you have the time to get all the required tasks done, and schedule completion dates for each task.

8. **Arrange for impartial local reviews of your draft application.** Drafts of your application should be reviewed by others at the local level who are not closely involved with the application and who have looked at and are familiar with the CDBG Application Guidelines. They can serve as your editors – they can raise questions or spot gaps or inconsistencies in your arguments and notice missing or weak evidence that you may not be able to see because you are too close to the project to be aware of them. Getting others involved can bring in a fresh perspective that may question some of your assumptions or see weaknesses that you cannot. Have your reviewers check both your early draft and your final draft against the CDBG Application Guidelines.
9. **If your community was an unsuccessful applicant previously, make arrangements with Department of Commerce CDBG staff to review the ranking comments concerning your previous application.** Find out what areas needed to be improved -- and be sure you address each of them in your new application. You can borrow copies of successful applications for similar projects to get ideas on how to prepare a stronger application.
10. **Even if your previous application received a maximum score on a particular ranking criterion, review your response to see if it can be strengthened further.** The funds available are limited and the review process can only select a small number of grantees
11. **Take a holistic, coordinated approach to describing your project.** Several of the CDBG ranking criteria consider interrelated issues. The strongest applications often approach each of the 5 ranking criteria as components of a coordinated, overall strategy rather than as separate and distinct responses to stand-alone issues. Keep all the ranking criteria in mind at each stage in preparing the overall application narrative. A key concept (such as your community's long-term approach to planning and managing housing problems and issues using your Housing Plan), can be integrated throughout the application.
12. **Be concise and well organized.** A succinct, well organized application with a logical progression of ideas and clearly labeled, easy-to-locate exhibits with good and relevant evidence makes it easier to understand the case that you are making for your project.
13. **Give evidence that documents knowledgeable, broad community support for your specific project.** The CDBG program encourages public involvement in the preparation of and implementation of local CDBG projects. The support of residents and others in the community is critical to your grant application and also to your project's success.

Strengthen your application by including support letters that show widespread community support for your project and letters that show familiarity with the specifics of your project – include letters that describe local resources that will help make the project a success (for example, contribution of in-kind services, funds, or volunteer efforts).